52,
Tavistock Square,
W.C.1.
Telephone: Museum 2621.

5th April 1938

Dear Sue Ling

I hope you have had the letter I wrote in answer to your first letter. I wrote only a few days after I had yours. Now Vanessa has just sent on your letter of March 3rd. I wish I could help you. I know that you have much more reason to be unhappy than we have given; & therefore how foolish any advice must be. But my only advice — & I have tried to take it myself — is to work. So when think how you could fix your mind upon something worth doing in itself. I have not read any of your writing, but Julian often wrote to me about it, & meant to show me some of it. He said too that you had lived a most interesting life; indeed, we had discussed — I think in letters — the chance that you would try to write an account of your life in English. That is what I would suggest now. Your English is quite good enough to give the impression you wish to make: & I could help you Change anything difficult to understand.

make a beginning, & just down gaily anything you remember!
As no one in England knows you, the book could be
more free than usual. Then I would do it if it could not
be printed. But please think of this: not merely as a
distraction, but as a work that would be of great
value to other people too. I find autobiographies much
better than novels. You ask what books I would advise
you to read: I think the English in the 18th Century
wrote in the best way for a foreigner to learn from.
Do you like letters? There are Cowper, Walpole; very clear &
easy: Scotts novels: (Rob Roy, ~~Red Gauntlet~~,) Jane Austen: then
Mrs Gaskells life of Charlotte Bronte: then among modern
writers, George Moore's novels. They are simply written too.
I would lend you English books, but I do not know if you have
them already. But from your letter I see that you write
very well; you need not copy others, only find new words.
by reading quickly. I say nothing about politics. You know
from what I said before how strangely the English are on your side
but cannot do anything to help. We hear about China
from friends here. But perhaps now there will be a change.
The worst may be over. At any rate please remember
that I am always glad of letters about yourself or politics
Anything about yourself: & you will write & tell me
pleasure to me to read some of your writing. & it
could be a great
encourage it: so think of writing your life. & if
you only write a few pages at a time, I could read
them, we could discuss it. I wish I could do
more. We send our best sympathy

Yours Virginia Woolf

April 9th 1938

52, Tavistock Square, w.c.1.
Telephone : Museum 2621.

Dear Sue Ling

I got your letter written on March 3rd a few days ago, & answered it at once. But stupidly I forgot to send it by air mail — & I write this to tell you that I have written. And the only thing of any interest I had to say was to ask you to write your autobiography, & to say I will gladly read it & give it any correction it needs. Now your other letter has just come, in which you tell me that you

have begun to write this. I am so glad. Julian always told me that you had lived a most interesting life: & you say he also wanted you to write it down – simply, as it came, not bothering about grammar at all. I also asked Leif if you would like me to send you any old English book – 18th Century ones perhaps – so that you could learn words. But you will find this in my letter. Let me know if I can do anything to help you in your work. I am Certain work is the only way in which one can live at the moment. I will send this now, & hope you will get it soon. We send our sympathy & thank always with for news both of you & of your war, & politics

Yr Virginia Woolf

52 Tavistock Sq uare . 27th July 1938

Dear Madame Sue Ling,

I have just seen Christopher Isherwood, who gave me the lovely little box with the two little gifts from you. I need not say that I am much touched that you should have got them for me, and I shall keep them on my table--not as a moemory of you, for I have never seen you, but all the same I think of you often. Thank you so much.
I heard from him how much they had enjoyed seeing you. But he was only here for a moment, and I did not have time to get much information from him.
I hope however that you are going on with your work.
I am sending you two little books ~~of~~ one is the life of Charlotte Bronte, the other Lambs Essays.
I think Lamb wrote very good English prose-- but do not bother to read it a an exercise; only for pleasure.—
The life of Charlotte Bronte will perhaps give you a feeling for the lives of women writers in England in the 19th century--their difficulties, and how she overcame them. And it is a very interesting life in other ways.
But I will send other books from time to time, on condition that you do not think you must thank me for

them. And certainly you must never think of paying for them. hey are so cheap in England. I can buy them for a few pence. Tell me the names of any you think you would like.

We are just going down to Sussex, and I hope to have more time there. London is so crowded. There is a quiet time here politically for the moment. That is to say we are waiting for what Hitler may do next. People are tired of talking about war; but all the same we do nothing but buy arms. The air is full of aeroplanes at the moment.

I hope some day you will write again and tell me how you are getting on with your own work. And please remember how glad I shall be to give you any help I can in reading it and correcting any mistakes. But write exactly as you think--that is the only way.

With my love, good bye. Please call me Virginia. I do not like being Mrs Woolf.

Virginia Woolf.

Monks House, Rodmell, Lewes Sussex
15th Oct. 1938

I am typing this, so as to save your eyes, for my writing is so hard to read. At last I have read the chapter you sent me--I put it off, for one reason and another. Now I write to say that I like it very much. I think it has a great charm. It is also of course difficult for an English person, at first, there is some incoherence, and one does not understand the different wives; who they are; which is speaking. But this becomes clear after a time; and then I feel a charm in the very unlikeness. I find the similes strange and poetical. How far it can be read by the public as it stands, I do not know. That I could only say if you would go on sending me more chapters. Then I should get the whole impression. This is only a fragment. Please go on; write freely; do not mind how directly you translate the Chinese into the English. In fact I would advise you to come as close to the Chinese both in style and in meaning as you can. Give as many natural details of the life , of the house, of the furniture as you like. And always do it as you would were you writing for the Chinese. Then if it were to some exrtent made easy grammatically by someone English I think it might be possible to keep the Chinese flvour and make it both understandable yet strange for the English.

One of the reasons why I did not read it or write

before was that we have been so uneasy in England; we were almost sure of war. Everything was ready, even the gas masks served out, and orders given to house children from London. This atmosphere made it difficult to fix ones mind on books. Now for the time at least that strain is over.

Please forgive me then for having been so long in writing. Next time you send me more chapters-- soon I hope-- I will write more quickly.

We are just going back to London. The houses there are still protected many of them with sand bags. But in China I know things are far worse. I find the only relief is to work. And I hope you will go on, writing, for it might be a very interesting book.

Did you get a letter I wrote in August, and a parcel of books? Tell me, for if they came safe I will send more. It is easy to get books cheaply in London. Please never think of paying for them. It is a great pleasure to me to send them. Tell me what you like. It is difficult to know. I am keeping the manuscript you sent. I can read your writing quite easily. so dont bother to type. Yours with love,

Virginia Woolf

52 Tavistock Square
London WC 1

Monks House Rodmell Lewes Sussex

17th April 1939

Dear Sue,

I am so glad to hear that you have at last got my letter safely. I will always send them by air mail in future. I have heard several times from you, and I am keeping your chapters as they come. But I hope you keep copies, so that there may be no risk through the post. It is difficult to know what to advise you to do, except that I am sure you ought to go on writing. The difficulty is as you say about the English. I feel that the whole feeling of the book would be very much spoilt if some English person were to put what you write into formal English prose; yet of course as it stands it is difficult for English readers to get at your full meaning. I suppose you could not dictate to an educated English person? Perhaps in that way the sense and the feeling could be combined. But it would depend entirely upon finding someone who could be quick enough to understand and able to express. I must of course leave this to you, as I do not know what opportunities you have. Meanwhile, I think it is best to get toegther as many chapters as possible; and then to read them all through together. One cannot get a true impression if one reads in little bits. But I have seen enough to be interested and charmed. Publication would of course depend upon many things so that it is useless to think of it---things we cannot control. But please go on, and let us hope that

it will be come more hopeful for books later. At the moment we are finding it very difficult to continue our publishing for nobody will read anything except politics; and we have had to make plans for taking our press away from London, and of course have to face the prospect, should there be war, of shutting up our publishing house altogether It is very difficult to go on working under such uncertainty. But I myself feel it is the only possible relief from the perpetual strain. It has become worse here, since Italy also began to steal land. We do not know if the American president's appeal will be heard. If not, then nothing can prevent war. We are spending Easter in the country; but all the time aeroplanes are crossing the house and every day we hear of some unfortunate refugee who asks for help. I am reading Chaucer and trying to write about our freind Roger Fry.
Also Vanessa and her children come over and we play bowls, and try to go on with out painting and gardening as if we were sure of living another ten years. When I go to London I will see if I can find some books to send you. Only I find it so difficult to guess what you would like. Never mind; books are very cheap; and you can always throw them away.

TYPE

I have not seen Christopher Isherwood as I had hoped but he and Mr Auden like so many people have gone to Ameri ca. They dont like it, I hear; but at any rate there is more feeling of security there; and they can work better so they say. But I had wanted to hear more about you. It seems millions of miles away--your life, from this. It is full spring here; and our garden has blue, pink, white flowers---and all the hills are deep green; but very small; and our little river is about as big as a large snake; Julian used to wade across it; and sail a tiny boat . On the other hand, people crowd together. We are hardly ever alone even for a day. Would you like this change of proportion? I often envy you, for being in a large wild place with a very old civilisation. I get hints of it in what you write. Do you ever send Vanessa your paintings? Please write whenever you like; and whatever happens please go on with your autobiography; for even though I cannot help yet with it, it will be a great thing to do it thoroughly; I am giving you the advice I try to take myself--that is to work without caring what becomes of it, for the sake of doing something impersonal.

I will send this by air, and let me know if it comes safely. If so, I will go on if you dont mind these very scrappy letters; written in a garden house, after my morning working at my book.

Yours

Virginia Woolf

52 avistock Square London wc1

16th uly 39

Dear Sue, afraid
I am frrid that I have been very bad about answering your letters. It is partly that I am a very bad letter writer--aftter writing all the morning about Roger Fry, I hate the type writer. And then we went to rance for a holiday, driving about Brittany; and directly after that my mother in law had an accident; was ill and died. And now we have to turn out of this house, which is carmmed with books and papers and type and furniture and go to another. 37 Mecklenburgh quare will be our address in September. So I hope you will write there.

Also it is difficult to think of any news worth sending. One only caps stories of war--and you have enough of your own. Here they say it must come next month. That is what Harold Nicolson who is in Parliamnt told me two nights ago. By this time one is so numb that it seems impossible to feel anything, save that dull vague gloom. We are getting used, I suppose. But it will be different when it comes. Like you, I find work the best thing; and have more than I can do.
It is dull work--sorting letters, trying to find quotations; trying to fit them together. Roger ry left such masses of papers; and they are full of inferest; but full too of xhxxxxxxx detail. I keep wanting Julian to help me. I am keeping all your chapters together.
As told you, I shant read them till the book is done. And please go on with it, as it might be of such great interest. I am also sorry that I have never sent more books ---I began to feel for one thing that books would never reach you. But I will get some cheap ones this week; chancing that you may like them. There again, I dont know what to send. whether new or old, poetry or fiction or biography. But tell me some time what it is that you would like.
Thank you very much for the red and bl ack poster, which I liked. And you say you are sending something else to anessa. I am just going to dine with her. That is a great pleasure. And i wish you lived near and could come in.
These little meetings are the best things we have at present. We talk about pictured not about war.
I am so sorry for all you are having to suffer--but what is the ise of saying that, all these miles away? Any time you want to write please do. The letter will be sent on. Next week we go down to ussex, Monks ouse Rodmell Lewes that is the address. Will one be able to work? Will one have to fill the house with refugees? There are aeroplanes always round us; and air raid shelters---but I still believe we shall have peace. And there I will stop. With my love and believe in my sympathy, futile as it seems.

Yours